A SERMON

Preached at the

Primary Viſitation

OF THE

Right Reverend Father in God

JOHN

Lord Biſhop of *NORWICH.*

JUNE, 20th. 1693.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

JOHN,

Lord Biſhop of *NORWICH.*

My Lord,

YOUR Lordſhip's pleaſure to have this Sermon publiſhed, is founded (as I ſuppoſe) upon this Opinion; That the Meditations it contains are uſeful, *though* obvious; *and have a genuine force, though not ſet off with* Illuſtration, *nor enforced (as they might have been) with* artificial *Arguments. Indeed my aim in preaching it, was only to be a* Remembrancer *of ſuch appoſite, and ſeaſonable Truths, as*

might merit to be conſidered; and the conſideration of which might promote in us of the Clergy, a faithful, wiſe and cloſe attendance on our Miniſterial Charge. To which end, if the Publication may in any ſort ſerve; I am abundantly rewarded for my Labour, and ſhall ever rejoice in my Obedience to your Lordſhip's Commands; Which however ſhall be always moſt readily obſerved by

Your moſt Humble,

and Dutiful Servant,

GEO. RAYMOND.

A

SERMON

Preached at the

Primary Viſitation, &c.

EPHES. IV. 12.

For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt.

I Have thought it unneceſſary in this Auditory, to travel into the Context, or ſpend any of the time in unfolding the Text: but have deſigned only to offer to your meditation, ſuch uſeful Obſervations, and practical Remarks, as the words furniſh, ſuitable to our preſent Occaſion. The general Inſtruction contain'd in them is this; *viz.* That the Sacred Miniſtry appointed by Chriſt in his Church, when he aſcended up into Heaven, is a ſignal Pledge of his love to, and care for it. For whether that Miniſtry were *Extraordinary*, and to continue for a time only, as that of the Apoſtles,

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ſtles, Prophets, and Evangeliſts; or whether *Ordinary* and Perpetual, as Paſtors and Teachers; the end of both is *for the perfecting of the Saints, and for the edifying of the body of Chriſt.*

Πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν,] For the compacting [a] or knitting together, the Saints, or Chriſtians ſanctified unto God, by their Calling, and fellowſhip in the Goſpel of his Son. And this may afford us the firſt uſeful Note or Obſervation; *viz.* 1ſt, That regular communion and fellowſhip among Chriſtians, is neceſſary to the edification of the Church: But the Separatiſt (whatever his Pretence be) neither edifieth himſelf, nor the Church of God. As a Houſe is finiſhed by compacting its ſeveral Materials; ſo Miniſters edify the Church of Chriſt, by holding Chriſtians together in Unity and Peace, in orderly Aſſemblies, and regular Communion. This Chapter contains an Exhortation to Chriſtian Unity; and this is one Argument by which the Apoſtle preſſeth it: *viz.* That the Miniſtry left by Chriſt in his Church, as the greateſt Pledge of his kindneſs, may have a conſummate effect, and fully anſwer the ends of his Love. For verſe 16. *From Chriſt the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint ſupplieth, according to the effectual working in the meaſure of every part, maketh increaſe of the body unto the edifying of it ſelf in love.* They therefore prophane the Miniſtry they pretend to, and deſtroy the Church which they ſhould edify, who are the Authors and Abettors

[a] The original notion of the word καταρτίζειν is to compact or knit together, either members in a Body, or parts in a Building, *Exod.* 15. 17. *Pſal.* 40. 6. more largely it ſignifies to *prepare, corroborate*; and laſtly, to *perfect*, as the building of a Houſe is the perfecting of it. So *Heſychius*, καταρτίσαι, κατασκευάσαι, τελειῶσαι, ἀρτιῶσαι, Ham. *in* 2 Cor. 13. 11. c.

tors of uncharitable Schisms, causeless, and unchristian Separations. He that hath not more regard to Christian Unity, and the Churches peace, than to his own Honour, Humour or Interest, wants the Spirit of a Minister of Christ; is like to make sad Work, and to give a dreadful Account of the Ministry committed to, or assumed by him. And they who forsake their regular Ministers (b) for *better Edification*, *purer Ordinances*, or upon the new pretence of *Absolute Loyalty*, do as a Man that pulleth down his House for the more easy coming at the Roof, to mend the Tiles, or beautify the Ceiling. But I will not enlarge upon this Note.

(b) *Inexpiabile & grave est culpa discordiæ, nec passione purgatur.* Cypr. de Unit.

Aliud altare constitui, aut sacerdotium novum fieri præter unum altare, & unum sacerdotium non potest; Quisquis alibi collegerit, spargit. Procul ab hujusmodi hominum contagione discedite; vitate lapsi qui oves à Pastore secernunt. Id. Ep. 40.

2. We may observe, That the Office of Ministers doth respect the Body, or Church of Christ; and private Christians in order to the whole as Members of the Body. The *perfecting of the Saints* is in order to the *edifying*, and consummating of *the Body of Christ*. Whence it follows, that the Governors of the Church must take such order, as tends to *General* Edification; and may not consult the Opinion, Fancy, or real Benefit of some individual Christians, to the detriment and offence of a considerable Body of Christians; much more of the whole Christian Church. Neither may Ministers gratify the desires of *private Christians*, to the breach of *publick Order*. It becometh private Persons to be modest, and tractable to publick Discipline, lest they

they be found guilty of obstructing the Work of the Ministry, and frustrating the tender Love of Christ to his Church: Whilst they are so perverse, that if they be not gratified in every thing, (and yet so fickle as scarce to know what pleaseth them;) all must go to wrack and confusion by their obstinate Separations. Indeed an excellent Prudence, generous Charity, tender Compassion to the Infirmities and Prejudices of Men, are highly requisite in the Authors of publick Constitutions; but Humility and Modesty becomes those, who are to observe them; and by both these, when they happily meet, shall the Church be edified, particular Christians growing up to perfection by regular Submission to *wise* Constitutions, *sincerely* ordain'd for publick benefit.

3. The words teach us the Divine Original of the Ministry; it is from Christ, appointed by him in his Church for the Edification thereof. *Let men therefore so account of us as* Ambassadors, *and Ministers of Christ*; and let us shew the *faithfulness requisite in Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, 1 Cor. 4, 1, 2. Christ hath given to his Church Pastors and Teachers; and when he ascended into Heaven, entring into his Kingdom, the first Act of his Royal Authority was the constituting, and sending these his *Officers* and *Messengers*, into the World. He sent the first wi[illegible] power to provide themselves [illegible] promiseth to *be with them* [illegible] He gave them their Co[illegible] them with [illegible] *structions*, [illegible] Subsistence; for *the Lord hath ordained* [illegible] *which the Gos-*

[illegible] Matt. 20. 20. John 14. 16.

pel ſhould live of the Goſpel, 1 Cor. 9. 14. both the Preachers and their Maintenance, are his Ordinance.

The ſame Light of Nature that taught Heathens to hold Aſſemblies for Religious Worſhip, directed (d) them to have alſo a diſtinct Order of Men, to officiate and preſide in them. And if ſuch an Order be neceſſary, then muſt there be ſome known and regular way of ſeparating Perſons to, and inveſting them with the Sacred Office; otherwiſe the Office it ſelf fails by being laid in common. Juſtice cannot be adminiſtred, but by *ſelect* Perſons *commiſſion'd* thereunto; nor is it ſufficient to make one a Magiſtrate, that he hath the *Gifts and Spirit* of Government, unleſs alſo he be legally Authorized and Appointed thereunto. So there can be no *orderly Adminiſtration* of Sacred things, no *Work of the Miniſtry*, unleſs there be a legal way of ſeparating and ordaining Perſons to that Work. And if ſuch Ordinations (e) in the Apoſtolical times were judged neceſſary, whenas Perſons were deſigned to this Sacred Miniſtry by the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt; how much more needful are they now, when men muſt fit themſelves for the Miniſtry by diligent Study, and vertuous Converſation? Upon which account 'tis now abſolutely neceſſary that there ſhould be a power to judge of the Abilities of Candidates, and to provide for the Church-Miniſters, duly qualified to officiate therein, which Power can't be executed,

(d) *Cum multa* Divinitus, *Pontifices, à majoribus noſtris inventa atque inſtituta ſunt, tum nihil præclarius, quàm quod* Vos *eoſdem & Religionibus Deorum immortalium, & ſummæ Reip.* Præeſſe *voluerunt.* Cicer. Orat. ad Pont.

(e) Acts 14. 23. Tit. 1. 5.

nor this proviſion made without maintaining a diſtinct Order.

In whoſe hands this Power of Ordaining is lodged, hath been the Subject of a pernicious Controverſy, managed by the Authors and Abettors thereof, with more of the Will and Paſſion, than of the Underſtanding. Some contend that the Peoples Call, and others that the Presbyters Hands are a ſufficient deſignation of any Perſon to the ſacred Office. To which (not deſigning Enlargement, nor Controverſy) I briefly anſwer; That *we have no ſuch Cuſtom, nor the Churches of God* before us: for *from the beginning it was not ſo* (f), as hath been abundantly demonſtrated by many Learned Writers. The Power of Ordination was from the beginning lodged in the hands of the Biſhops; and this Order univerſally received as conformable to Apoſtolical Practice, and the mind of Chriſt (g). Both the Antiquity and Univerſality of this practice is confeſſed by the moſt learned of our Diſſenting Brethren, as might be eaſily ſhewed: and certainly the Controverſie, with reſpect to preſent practice, would ſoon be decided, would but our ſaid Brethren fairly and impartially conſider theſe two or three things; *viz.* That the uſage of our Church in this matter, is conform to the Primitive and Conſtant Practice of the

[f] Ὥσπερ οὖν ὁ κύριος ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς οὐδὲν ποιεῖ, ὅτι οὐδὲ ὑμεῖς ἄνευ τοῦ Ἐπισκόπου, μηδὲ πρεσβύτερος, μηδὲ διάκονος, μηδὲ λαϊκός. Ignat. Ep. ad Magneſ.

Τί δὲ πρεσβυτέριον; ἀλλ' ἢ σύνταγμα ἱερέων; σύμβουλοι καὶ συνεδρευταὶ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου. Id. ad Trull.

Inde (Sc. Chriſti diſpoſitione) *per temporum & Succeſſionum vices, Epiſcoporum Ordinatio, & Eccleſiæ ratio decurrit, ut* Eccleſia ſuper Epiſcopos conſtituatur, *& omnis actus Eccleſiæ per eoſdem præpoſitos gubernetur.* Cypr. Epiſt. 27.

(g) *Nec Epiſcopus computari poteſt, qui* Evangelica & Apoſtolicâ traditione *contemptâ, nemini ſuccedens à ſeipſo ortus eſt.* Cypr. Ep. 76.

Conſtat id eſſe ab Apoſtolis Traditum, *quod apud Eccleſias Apoſtolicas fuerit ſacroſanctum.* Tertul. adv. Marc. 4. 5.

the Churches of Chriſt; and that the Laws only require Obedience to this good Order, but do not exact any Declaration of their Opinion concerning it. That Epiſcopal Ordination doth not exclude, but comprehends the *Peoples Suffrage*, and the *Presbyters hands*. (h) That they do not alledge, much leſs prove the Biſhops preſiding in this matter, to be ſinful; therefore a Separation from the National Church upon that account, muſt be cauſeleſs and ſinful. That to oppoſe eſtabliſh'd Order which is not unreaſonable, and to aſſume and execute an Office in contempt of ſuch publick Diſcipline and Conſtitution, is to walk diſorderly, and work Confuſion, which is not to be Followers of God and Chriſt (i).

Habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apoſtolis inſtituti ſunt Epiſcopi *in Eccleſiis, & ſucceſſores eorum uſque ad nos.* Iren. l. 3. 3.

When I ſhall ſee all the Fables in the *Metamorphoſis* acted, and prove Stories; when I ſhall ſee all the *Democracies* and *Ariſtocracies* in the World lie down and Sleep, and awake into Monarchies; then will I begin to believe that Presbyterial Government, having continued in the Church during the Apoſtles times, ſhould preſently after (againſt the Apoſtles Doctrine, and the Will of Chriſt) be whirl'd about like a Scene in a Maſque, and transformed into Epiſcopacy. In the mean time, Epiſcopacy being confeſſed to be ſo Ancient and Catholick, muſt be granted alſo to be Apoſtolick. *Chillingw.* p. 324.

[h] Τὸ μὲν ἀξιονόμαστον πρεσβυτέριον, ἄξιον ὂν τοῦ θεοῦ ὅπως συνήρμοσται τῷ Ἐπισκόπῳ, ὡς χορδαὶ κιθάρᾳ· συνδεδομένοι ἔστω τῇ ὁμονοίᾳ μὲν συμφώνῳ ἀγάπῃ, Ἰησοῦς δὲν ἀρχιμὸς καὶ φύλαξ Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός. Ignat. Ep. ad Epheſ.

A primordio Epiſcopatus mei ſtatuerim nihil ſine conſilio veſtro, *& ſine conſenſu plebis meæ privatâ ſententiâ gerere.* Cypr. Ep. 6.

In ordinationibus Clericis, fratres Chariſſimi (Sc. Clerus & Plebs) *ſolemus vos ante conſulere, & mores ac merita ſingulorum communi conſilio ponderare.* Cypr. Ep. 33.

Ordinationes ſacerdotales, non niſi ſub populi aſſiſtentis conſcientiâ fiant. Ib. Ep. 68.

(i) *Quid enim non periculum metuere debemus; quando aliqui de Presbyteris nec Evangelii, nec loci ſui memores, neque futurum domini judicium cogitantes, quod nunquam anteceſſoribus factum eſt, cum contumeliâ & contemptu præpoſiti totum ſibi vendicant?* Cypr. Ep. 10.

I will not ſay (as ſome do) that God hath tack'd the Efficacy of Sacraments, and of his Grace, and conſequently the Salvation of Men, to the Punctilio's of Ordination; ſo that there is no work of the

Miniſtry done, but all the Flock loſt, and undone; if the Miniſter doth not derive his Orders from ſome one of the Apoſtles by an uninterrupted Succeſſion. The Conſequences of this *raſh Opinion* are diſhonourable to God, and prejudicial to Piety; and the practice of the Church of *England* needs no ſuch defence. [k] But certainly this may be ſaid, and ought to be conſidered, That the Uſurpers of an Office, and Invaders of well-eſtabliſh'd Order and Diſcipline, can very little expect a Bleſſing from the God of *Peace and Order*; nor can be Miniſters unto ſound and orderly Chriſtians. They therefore who, according to the publick good Order of the Church, are appointed to the Sacred Office, with the Suffrage of the People, the Approbation of the Biſhop, by the Impoſition of his Hands, together with thoſe of the Presbytery, being regularly called and ordained, may ſay with the firſt Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt (though not in the ſame plenitude of ſence) That they are his Embaſſadors, *ſet by him in the Church*, and that the *Holy Ghoſt hath made them Overſeers of the Flock.*

(k) See the Preface to the Office for Ordination.

4*thly*, The words lead us to reflect upon the grand importance, and ſingular utility of the Sacred Miniſtry, which Chriſt hath appointed in his Church, as an inſtance of his tender care over it, and for the edifying and conſummating thereof. Upon this Uſefulneſs of our Function, rather than upon the conceited Dignity of any *indelible Character*, may we juſtly value our ſelves: and for this ought the people to *eſteem their miniſters very highly*

highly in love for their works ſake, 1 Theſſ. 5. 13.

The important Uſefulneſs of the Office may appear from the Character the Holy Scripture gives of thoſe who are inveſted with it, and from the Inſtances of their Duty which it declares. The perſons to whom this truſt is committed, are by reaſon thereof ſtiled, not only Paſtors and Teachers, but the *Servants of the Lord*, 2 Tim. 2. 24. and that in a tranſcendent ſenſe beyond the reſt of Chriſtians: [1] yea *Stewards of God*, and of his *Myſteries*; Rulers over his Houſhold, to give them their portion of meat in due ſeaſon. They are alſo called *Builders* of that Houſe, Preſidents and Guides in, and over it: *Embaſſadors of Chriſt*, and *workers together with God*, for the converſion of Sinners, the edification of Saints, and ſalvation of Souls. And the particulars of their Duty are anſwerable to theſe Characters of their Perſons and Function.

[1] Ὑπηρέται, 1 Cor. 4. 1. Λειτουργοὶ, Rom. 15. 16. Οἰκονόμοι, μυστηίων Θεῦ, 1 Cor. 4. 1. Luke 12. 42. Οἰκοδόμοι, περισκοπῶντες, ἡγεμόνιοι, κυβερνήσεις, συνεργοὶ Θεῦ, 1 Cor. 3. 9.

For 1*ſt*, Their duty it is to hold Aſſemblies for Religious Worſhip; and to ſee that all things therein be orderly performed, and for Edification; that ſo Chriſtians [m] may be *provoked to good works*, and *knit together in love*; and glorifying God with one mind, and one mouth, may be edified in love, and *increaſe with the increaſe of God*. So the Scripture declareth this inſtance of our Miniſtry, together with the admirable fruits and benefits of it.

[m] Heb. 10. 24, 25. Coloſſ. 2. 2--19.

Again,

Again 2*dly*, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Goſpel, bringing glad tidings of good things*, Rom. 10. 15.

Now unto this we are ordained; and this is what we have ſolemnly vowed, *viz.* to feed the Flock with ſound Doctrine, diligently to teach, and inſtruct out of the Holy Scriptures the People committed to our charge. [n] Thus, the Loving-kindneſs of our Bleſſed Saviour, foreſeeing the perpetual need of his Family, hath provided for their conſtant relief. That the heavenly Doctrine, that Bread which nouriſheth to Eternal Life, ſhould conſtantly be ſet before, and broken amongſt them: That the ſtudy and labour of thoſe who give themſelves to this very thing, may be profitable to ſuch who are encumbred with variety of Secular Affairs: That ſaving Knowledge may be ſo advantagiouſly inculcated, as to render groſs ignorance next to impoſſible, and ſpiritual wiſdom eaſily attainable: That by a particular application of general Truths, good thoughts may be inſtill'd, and good purpoſes from time to time excited in the hearts of the People.

[n] See the Interrogatories in the Ordination of Prieſts.

That the cogitations of mens hearts may be met withal, their prejudices detected, their Conſciences awakened, and preſs'd upon duty: That the Underſtanding of the Weak may be aſſiſted, and the reigning Vices and Errors of every Age and Place corrected, by men skilful to apply the Sacred Truths, and to preſs ſuch portions of them as are moſt apt and

and ſeaſonable: eſpecially that thoſe practical Truths which men ſufficiently know, but are willing to forget, and averſe to conſider, by being frequently inculcated, pathetically urged, and ſet in a proper and commanding light, may make their *genuine impreſſions* upon, and produce their *ſalutary fruits* in the hearts and lives of Chriſtians: That they may be frequently reminded of their ſolemn Obligations, and made ſenſible of the connexion between Faith and Holineſs, between the *avowed Principles* of their Creed, and the *bounden Duties* of a Chriſtian Life.

The benefits of this Miniſtration are ſo many and great, that 'tis hard to number or weigh them. And the Ignorance, Barbarity and Wickedneſs of thoſe places where Preaching is quite omitted, or triflingly performed, is a demonſtration of the neceſſity and uſefulneſs thereof. A Conſideration ſufficient of it ſelf to engage Miniſters unto a ſerious and faithful diſcharge of this part of their Office, and Vow; and the People to a thankful and conſcientious attendance on this Miniſtry, and to ſtop the mouths of thoſe who think Preaching to be the leaſt (if any) part of our Office, and very little of that ſufficient. [*] It is certainly becauſe ſuch mens Conſciences cannot bear the light of wiſe and good Inſtruction, that they are ſo willing to part with it. But of that more under the next Head.

[*] *In Religionibus ſuſcipiendis, caput eſt* interpretari, *quæ voluntas deorum immortalium eſſe videatur.* Cicer. *Orat. ad. Pontif.*

Farther,

Farther, 3*dly*, We have the Office of private Guides, as well as publick Teachers. We *watch for ſouls, as thoſe that muſt give an account*, Heb. 13. 17. We muſt *feed the flock, taking the overſight thereof*, 1 Pet. 5. 2. We vowed at our Ordination, [°] *With all faithful diligence to uſe both publick and private Admonitions and Exhortations, as well to the ſick as to the whole, within our Cures, as need ſhall require, and occaſion be given.* Many and great are the benefits of this work of the Miniſtry, faithfully diſcharged on our part, and duly complied with by the People. By this means may we reſolve their particular Doubts and Scruples; rectify their Errors and Prejudices; help them to judge impartially in their own caſe; inculcate good Thoughts; animate good Purpoſes; regulate their Zeal; fortify them againſt their moſt powerful Temptations; comfort them in their Sorrows, and confirm their Hopes; and, by ſome one private Conference, more advance their ſpiritual Eſtate, than by many publick Sermons. And for theſe purpoſes ought we to be acquaint with our People, watching for opportunities to do them what good we can; and giving them occaſion and encouragement to uſe us as Guides and Helpers, though not Maſters, of their Faith. Would to God men would duly conſider, that the Sacred Miniſtry may be profitably uſed, beyond the publick Exerciſes of it: and that, if they ſteer amiſs through contempt of the Pilot's skill, they are guilty of their own ruine; obnoxious to God for the neglect of his gracious Proviſion; and periſh in their Pride or Preſumption.

[°] Ordinat. Office, Interrog. 4.

4*thly*,

4*thly*, The benefit of great and good Examples is readily owned; and ſuch, in a ſingular manner, the Miniſters of Chriſt are deſigned to be. *They muſt be Enſamples to the Flock*, 1 Pet. 5. 3. *ſhewing themſelves, in all things, patterns of good works.* We muſt carefully look, that there be a good agreement between our Doctrine and our Practice; leſt we teach our People to be Unbelievers and Atheiſts: whilſt they conſider us as a ſort of Sophiſters, that would impoſe upon them, what they plainly ſee we do not believe our ſelves. [P] *Bleſſed is that good and faithful Servant, who keepeth the Commandments of God, and teacheth men ſo: he ſhall be great* (*i.e.* his Reward ſhall be ſo) *in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And though an Age of general Licentiouſneſs, and wherein good Diſcipline is altogether relaxed, doth but little recommend holy Inſtitutions; yet even then it is viſible, that the ſacred Miniſtry is a check and bridle to the Vices of men; reſtraining them from the havock which they would otherwiſe make of all Godlineſs and Sobriety. But I ſhould exceed my limits, if I ſhould proceed to unfold of what ſignal uſe it is, to have an Order of men eminently holy, both in profeſſion and life. And theſe, Laſtly, under the Sacred

[P] Καλὸν τὸ διδάσκειν ἐὰν ὁ λέγων ποιῇ· ὃς γὲ ἂν ποιήσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ. Ignat. ad Epheſ.

Qui autem dicunt tantùm, non faciunt, ipſi præceptis ſuis detrahunt pondus. Quis enim obtemperet, cum ipſi præceptores doceant non obtemperare? Bonum eſt recta & honeſta præcipere; ſed niſi & facias mendacium eſt: Incongruum atque ineptum eſt, non in pectore ſed in labiis habere bonitatem. Lactant. *l.* 3. *c.* 16.

Obligations of their Office, and (as they will render a good account thereof) ingaged to be conſtant Interceſſors for the people: to pray continually and fervently for thoſe under their Charge, and for the good ſucceſs of their Miniſtry among them.

What hath been ſaid, ſhall ſuffice to evince the grand importance, and ſignal uſefulneſs of the ſacred Miniſtry; and to admoniſh us, that we prophane not the dignity of our Office, by ſubſtracting from the Utility thereof. Always remembring, that *uſeleſs* Authority or Power is ſcorn'd by wiſe men, and hated of all: But the *Miniſter of God for good*, ſhall (beſides his Reward in Heaven) have eſteem and love from men, for the benefit they receive from him.

5*thly*, We obſerve from the words, the neceſſity of continuing the Work of the Miniſtry in the Church of Chriſt. For it muſt laſt as long as the Church can be *edified*; till it be *conſummated* by it. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt*, v. 13.

The Extraordinary Functions of Apoſtles, Prophets, and Evangeliſts, ceaſed with the reaſon and occaſion of them; but the Ordinary Miniſtry of Paſtors and Teachers muſt abide for ever in the Church; becauſe ever needful for

for it. St. *Paul* in his Epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, preſcribes the Qualifications of Perſons to be ordained unto the ſacred Miniſtry: and theſe have nothing in them extraordinary; require not the Gifts of Tongues, or Miracles, or of Diſcerning Spirits; are not appropriate to any one Age, but deſcribe the Perſons that will be neceſſary, and uſeful, through all ſucceeding Ages of the Church. [q]

[q] *See* 1 Tim. 3. Tit. 1. 6, *&c.*

Our Bleſſed Lord hath made proviſions for the laſting needs of his Church; that his *Houſehold* may not want *Stewards*, nor his *Flock* Paſtors, nor his *Works* (which is the ſalvation of men by the knowledge of the truth) thoſe that ſhould *labour* therein. So long as there muſt be Chriſtian Aſſemblies held, there muſt be an Order of men to officiate in them: a Church and a Paſtor, or a Congregation and a Miniſter, being in right reaſon neceſſary Relatives, as well as in fact and uſage derived from Primitive and Apoſtolical practice. Publick Preaching (whatever ſome object) will be needful, ſo long as men are born ignorant, live viciouſly, or remain imperfect. So long as there is error, wickedneſs, and weakneſs in the Church; ſo long as there is a ſecular life to divert men from their holy purpoſes; a Devil to tempt, Sinners to entice, or Hereticks to ſeduce. The Uſefulneſs of this Miniſtration is readily acknowledged by pious Proficients in Chriſtianity; and ſure the Ignorant and Vicious have the leaſt pretence, of being *above Ordinances*, and of having ſuperſeded the neceſſity

of Teaching and Exhortation. They who are ſo willing to forget their known Duty, need ſuch Monitors to ſtir them up by way of remembrance; and it is the force and reſtraint of ſuch Admonitions which they feel, that makes them ſo deſirous to be rid of them. So that the ſort of the men who are the only Cavillers againſt frequent Preaching, is next to a demonſtration of the uſefulneſs thereof: Men who are very induſtrious either to debauch, or expoſe the Clergy; ſecretly hating them for the Authority of their Doctrine, and Influence of their Example; not valuing any part of their Office, unleſs, perhaps, their laſt miniſtration of Prayers, and the Holy Communion upon the approach of Death; fooliſhly truſting to that which can leaſt help them; and imagining to patch up a wicked and ungodly Life, with a religious End. For the uſe of the Miniſtry is in the time of life and health, by publick Preaching, and private Admonitions; by good Example, and wiſe Application; to lay reſtraints on the vicious Inclinations of men, and to cheriſh their virtuous Diſpoſitions and Purpoſes: and by renewing holy impreſſions upon their Spirits, to form them by degrees into a fixed Religious Temper; by reiterated Perſuaſions to prevail with them to give up themſelves unto, and become ſincere Diſciples and Followers of the Holy Jeſus. They who reſiſt this Grace of God, cannot love the Inſtruments of it; but they who receive the Grace of God, and

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the benefit of our Miniſtry, will always give him thanks for, and acknowledge the uſefulneſs of ſuch Authorized Guides in their way to Heaven.

But I diſmiſs this, intending to ſpeak ſomewhat more largely of the laſt Remark or Obſervation, which will contain a particular Addreſs to us of the Clergy. *Viz.*

6thly, If the Edification and Perfection of Chriſtians be the end of our Miniſtry, then we may note, what diligent Application, and holy Prudence is neceſſary; that we may level every Exerciſe of our Function at that Mark; and neither ſhoot beſide, nor ſhort of it. For we have not only ſuch variety, but alſo ſuch contradiction of Tempers to deal withal, that whilſt we ſeek the edification of one ſort, we are in danger of offending and deſtroying others. Give me leave to lay before you ſome of the difficult Caſes of our Miniſtry; not to diſcourage, but caution; to add fervour unto our Prayers for the Divine Aſſiſtance, and to excite a ſtudious application, and prudent diligence, that we may not do the *Work of our Lord* negligently, nor betray the *Truſt* committed to our Charge.

As for inſtance; In preaching (whatever ſome imagine) it is no ſuch eaſie matter to ſhew our ſelves *Workmen that need not be aſhamed, rightly dividing*

dividing the word of God [r]; for if we imploy but little pains and thoughts about the buſineſs, how can we expect that God ſhould *bleſs*, or the People *regard*, what we our ſelves *trifle* withal? And yet if we be very ſtudious and thoughtful, it is odds but we ſhall overdo; and though we may edify our ſelves, ſhall be *Barbarians* to the Congregation, and *ſpeak unto the Air* [s]. There is a looſe way of talking that profiteth none; and there is a cloſeneſs of reaſoning, too elaborate for common underſtandings.

[r] 2 Tim. 2. 15.

[s] 1 Cor. 14. 9, 11.

Again; If *Pulpits* affect the Pomp and Dreſs of the Stage, who can forbear concluding, That the Actors upon either have much the ſame deſign, *i. e.* Applauſe and Money? And yet on the other hand, there is a ſlovenly dreſs and meen, that expoſeth the Miniſtry, and gives too great occaſion for the Contempt of the Clergy.

Farther; If we neglect to enforce our Exhortations and Inſtructions with pertinent Citations of Holy Scripture, we Preach without *Authority* and *Effect*, as to the generality, whoſe Conſciences are readily commanded by the *Word of God*, when their Underſtandings can't reach the Force of an *Artificial* Argument. And yet if we deliver in Scriptures by Number, rather than Weight, or multiply *Sacred Phraſes*, without their proper ſenſe, we

we oppreſs and nauſeate ſome of our Auditors, and expoſe the Sacred Oracles, and our ſelves.

If we accuſtom our ſelves altogether to *General* Diſcourſes, and *Soft Harangues*; to what purpoſe is it thus to *ſtroke* the Conſciences of our people (as a Reverend Prelate of our Church expreſſeth it), with *Feathers dipt in Oyl*? Yet if we be very particular, and mightily fervent, there be ſome whom we ſhall exaſperate, inſtead of perſuading, or who will be more apt to ridicule the *indiſcreet* Fervour of the Preacher, than to weigh the Truth and Importance of the Exhortation.

If we deſcend not to the particular eſtates of mens ſouls, and their *Caſes* of Conſcience, we harden them in their folly, or abandon them to their Doubts and Scruples, without remedy. And yet Sermons that are very *Caſuiſtical*, (by a miſapplication almoſt inevitable) are in great danger of doing more harm than good. It is hard to determine any Caſe by General Rules, becauſe every man's Caſe is diverſified by Particular Circumſtances.

Again; If in our Sermons we do not exhibit *Rational* and *Judicious* Notions of the Chriſtian Religion, we furniſh *Sport* to the Prophane, and give *Scandal* to the Thinking: Theſe we provoke to go over to the Party of the Deiſts, if

if at any time we obtrude upon them trifling and ſilly, or miſ-ſhapen and monſtrous Notions of the Chriſtian Faith and Doctrine. Yet on the other hand, if we depart but a little from the vulgar prejudices, popular ſchemes and modes of ſpeaking, we are preſently ſuſpected or deſpiſed by another ſort of men, and loſe with their eſteem of us, our advantage of edifying them.

If we ſoar aloft into the Clouds, deal much in Myſteries, we ſhall tickle ſome, who imagine themſelves wrapp'd into Heaven by ſuch Diſcourſes, and *admire* becauſe they do not *underſtand*; but then we diſguſt the wiſer ſort of Auditors, and we profit none. Yet if we treat of the common Practical things in a plain and familiar manner, this is apt to be deſpiſed by many, as a mean Performance; becauſe we tell no *News*, we merit not *Attention*.

But I have ſaid more than enough upon this Head, to ſhew the difficulties attending our Miniſtry, and requiring our Study and Prudence; and that it is not ſo ſlighty a buſineſs (to him that will diſcharge a good Conſcience) to provide an hours talk for *Sunday*. We are perhaps at the ſame time to deal with perſons that hate Preaching, becauſe it diſturbs their Conſcience; and meditate *Revenge* on the Sermon by *Expoſing* it; and with others who are exceſ-

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ſively fond of Preaching, but in ſuch a faſhion and dreſs, as the Prophane can eaſily ridicule. We are at once to treat with, and perſuade, the Judicious and the Ignorant, the Timorous and the Confident, the Ingenuous and the Stubborn; ſuch whom nothing can awaken, but the *Terrors of the Lord*, and the Damnation of Hell; and ſuch too, whoſe Faith in God we deſperately ſhake, if we offer to *graft* upon it any terrible opinions of him. But I diſmiſs this, and will be more brief in the following Inſtances.

If we Catechiſe not diligently, we neglect our Duty, and omit what ſeemeth an important work of our Miniſtry: Yet if we do it at all, we know not to what purpoſe, nor which are the propereſt Methods, becauſe we can get no account of the Succeſs of any. They who are ſent to be Catechiſed, are too ſmall to receive any great benefit thereby; and they who might receive it, will not come for it.

Again; In viſiting ſick beds, we can do but little; yet often do too much; and by our tenderneſs to the dying, betray the living into falſe ſecurities. Whilſt we are intent to cheriſh *good beginnings*, we are in danger of encouraging a preſumptuous dependance upon a *good end*, (as they call it); *i. e.* A Death-bed Contrition, with the Miniſter's laſt Office, and the Church's Paſsport, as a ſuf-

ficient and ſafe *Plank* for *Shipwrack'd* Souls.

Our Converſation alſo is a weighty ſubject of our Prudence and Care; that we may edifie by our Example, as well as our Doctrine. If we keep at a diſtance from the people, we give them occaſion to think us Proud, and themſelves deſpiſed: And if we be very familiar, we are in danger of loſing that Reverence and Authority which recommends our Advices and Inſtructions to them. If we ſhut up our ſelves from Converſation, or be moroſe and ſour in it, we miſrepreſent our Maſter, and his holy Religion: And there be thoſe that will not fail to impute ſuch Monkiſhneſs to the *Notorious Qualities* of that Tribe, *Ignorance* and *Hypocriſie*. But if we uſe our Liberty, and converſe freely, what *vigilant* Circumſpection, and *ſtrict* Guard, will be always neceſſary, to ſecure *decorum* in our ſelves, and that we be not Witneſſes or Allowers of the Extravagancies of others, nor give them encouragement to paſs their bounds?

Finally; in the very demanding of our *Dues*, we meet with difficulties, and have need of Prudence: If we do it with Rigour, or but Exactneſs, that is apt to create a Prejudice againſt our Perſons and our Inſtructions; and if we be remiſs, then they that

that cheat us, learn thereby to undervalue and think meanly of us.

Theſe, and many more, are the Difficulties that require our Wiſdom, and will employ our moſt prudent application: For it is given us in charge, *That no man deſpiſe us*, *Titus* 2. 15. And that *we give no offence in any thing, that the Miniſtry be not blamed*, 2 Cor. 6. 3. Neither is it *our* Reputation only that is at ſtake, but the Credit of *Chriſt's Religion*, the *Intereſt* of *his* Kingdom, and the *Salvation* of the Souls committed to our Charge: For whom, if we do not faithfully bend our ſelves to do the beſt we can, we are guilty both of their deſtruction, and our own.

It cannot be expected that I ſhould preſcribe Rules to the forementioned caſes; that is the ſubject of each ones Perſonal Wiſdom and Study, according to the Gift beſtowed upon him. But let the conſideration of our important Charge, and the Difficulties that attend it, effectually prevail with us, *to ſtir up the gift of God that is in us* [t]; by diligent Study, by aſſiduous Attendance on our Miniſtry, and (above all) by continual Supplication and Prayer.

[t] 2 Tim. 1. 6. 1 Tim. 4. 14.

God that giveth wiſdom liberally to all that ask, will not deny his *immediate* Servants the meaſure neceſſary for the diſcharge of that Office which he hath inveſted them withal. Our Lord, whoſe Ambaſſadours we are, hath promiſed to *give us a mouth, and wiſdom, which all our Adverſaries ſhall not be able to gainſay or reſiſt*; Luke 21. 15. We may therefore pray in faith for extraordinary aſſiſtance upon extraordinary Emergencies; and for the Conduct and Succeſs of faithful and well-adviſed Endeavours in ordinary Caſes. Let us then join devout and fervent Prayer to aſſiduous Study: remembring always the Vows [u] of God that are upon us, and that *we are not ſufficient for theſe things*. Let us charge our ſelves with *the overſight of the Flock, as thoſe who muſt render an account* of them: be ſure to make their edification our Deſign; to have their profiting in wiſdom and holineſs, in ſerious conſideration and chief regard. See that every Sermon of ours be *fraught* with ſome pious Deſign; accommodated to the People with our beſt skill, and offered unto God for his Bleſſing. Let us ſpeak as the *Meſſengers of God*, and as becometh

[u] Continually to pray for the heavenly Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt from God the Father, by the mediation of our only Mediator and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt; that by daily reading and weighing of the Scriptures, ye may wax riper and ſtronger in your Miniſtry.

To be diligent in Prayers, and in reading of the Holy Scriptures, and in ſuch Studies as help to the knowledge of the ſame; laying aſide the ſtudy of the World and the Fleſh. *Ordination of Prieſts.*

cometh the Majeſty of *Divine* Truth [*]. Not with oſtentation of Wit or Eloquence, nor dealing in curious Speculations, or fruitleſs Controverſies; but endeavouring to faſten important Truths in the Conſciences of others with all that Authority and venerable regard that they have, or ought to have in our own. Let our Sermons be affectionate, but weighty; our Zeal diſcreet, and tempered with a ſenſe of humane Infirmities and Prejudices; but yet our meen and fervour ſuch, as may manifeſt that we are in earneſt, and executing the Truſt we have received from God. Let us be very careful, that we may be *Enſamples to the Flock*; of humble and hearty devotion in the Church, and of blameleſs and uſeful Converſation out of it. Let us converſe under a conſtant Guard, and with a ſenſe of the decorum that befits our Character, and may adorn our Miniſtry. Fly the Converſation of debauched and vain Perſons; and let the Vertuous and well-diſpoſed ſee that we love their Company. Be forward to all good Offices amongſt our People, and ſlow even to *neceſſary* Contentions and Suits.

[*] *Non diſerta ſed fortia, non ad affluentiæ popularis illecebram culto ſermone fucata, ſed ad divinam indulgentiam prædicandam rudi veritate ſimplicia.* Cypr. *Ep.* 1.

Cum de tribus ab oſtentatione ſubmotis agitur, quid dicatur ſpectandum eſt, non quali amœnitate dicatur; nec quid aures commulceat, ſed quas adferat audientibus utilitates: diſſoluti pectoris eſt, in rebus ſeriis quærere voluptatem; & cum tibi ſit ratio cum male ſe habentibus & ægris, ſonos auribus infundere dulciores, non medicinam vulneribus admovere. Arnob. adv. Gent.

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In a word, Let us ever aim at doing good; act ſoberly and adviſedly, and pray conſtantly to our Heavenly Lord and Maſter for direction and aſſiſtance; and this general care of our Duty will entitle us to the help of God, and procure us wiſdom from him ſufficient for the difficult Inſtances of it.

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